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In Woods and Fields

Augusta Larned

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IN WOODS AND FIELDS

BY

AUGUSTA LARNED



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

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IN WOODS AND FIELDS.

INVOCATION.

THEOCRITUS, my gentle bard,
Your nimble spirit I invoke ;
Note how the heifers on the sward
Leap and curvet without a yoke.

Sweet lover of a rustic lot,
Your ghost e'en warms to life again,
And haunts about this sunny spot,
And sheds a grace o'er boorish men.

The pretty calves scarce praised in rhyme
Or flattered by the poet's art,
With satin coat and breath of thyme,
Are fair as wild gazelle or hart.

How bright their eyes are looking forth
From foreheads soft and silky brown,
Where, shy and with infantile mirth,
White horns peep o'er the shaggy crown !

Like good St. Joseph's lily bud,
They pout beside the pretty ear,
And the coy ivory forth is wooed,
And seems alert to see or hear.

Why is our country life so sad,
Devoid of old-time cheer and hope ?
The flocks are frolicsome and glad
As when they browsed on Ida's slope.

But man is bowed and silent grown,
And woman joyless ere her prime ;
None sings except some happy drone
Who has no union with his time.

For nature's fresh unstudied mirth
Finds small response in rustic man,
And country music left the earth
When died the dear old goatish Pan.

Oh for a pipe upon the hills,
When set new currents toward the spring,
When the shrunk vein with ichor thrills,
And love has taught the thrush to sing !

Theocritus, say wilt thou deign
To bless this strange and virgin soil,
And by thy simple glad refrain
Charm us from greed and barren toil ?

But if thy shade can ne'er descend
From high, enthroned, poetic skies,
Nor stoop to greet us as a friend,
Nor gaze on us with kindly eyes,

Still that thou erst didst lend a grace
To shepherd lads, to flocks and herds ;
Paints auriols round the rustic face,
Round dairy maids and snowy curds ;

That thou didst love thy Grecian fields
In that far off and antique time,
E'en yet to us a music yields
That tinkles in the sheep bells' chime.

Earth lay within thy spheréd mind
Like sunny pictures dewed with sleep ;
The gods were young and ever kind.
And e'en Apollo kept his sheep.

SUMMER NOON.

EARTH spirit, thou dost love a windless sky,
And the deep silence of the heated noon,
When little breezes scarce go wandering by
And summer's spell has charmed the robin's tune.

Great potency of nature now has thrilled
Into the fibres of thy languid frame,
Mandragora and poppy twice distilled
Rise like a vapor to thy drowsy brain.

When tired mowers seek a friendly shade,
Oft to the tumbled meadows thou dost hie ;
On clover pillows leans thy heavy head,
And perfumes steal from where the windrows lie.

A burning haze has veiled the grassy land,
The sun's remorseless tides are pouring down,
A naked blade whirled in a mighty hand
Flashes the jewels of thy queenly crown.

The laden bee drones in thy heedless ear,
The cicada sings loving well the heat,
The priestly cricket, though none heed or hear,
His *benedictus* chants amid the wheat.

No leaflet trembles on the tangled hedge,
The fern droops hidden in its mossy nook,
A dragon's breath has scorched the plummy sedge,
And e'en the wild-rose faints beside the brook.

Now shadows gather on broad-breasted hills,
Where dim the pines and feathered larches lean,
And dewy evening freshness soft distils
From hidden depths and from the noiseless stream.

Arise, earth spirit, and shake off thy swoon,
Drunk with the sunshine as with fervid wine,
Arise and free thee from the heated noon,
And in thy locks bind rose and eglantine.

See where she moves across the meadow plain,
With waving robe that freshens all the flowers,
A sense of dew, a breath of tender rain
Brings thoughts of sea-wind and of dropping
showers.

TO A CAGED BOBOLINK IN THE CITY.

BIRD of the meadow,
Sunlight and shadow,
Swaying at ease on the tall, blooming math,
Blissfully swinging,
Gleefully singing,
Where the low breezes join in the laugh.

Once so cheerily,
Now so drearily,
Run these sad hours in the long, stony street ;
No dale or mountain,
Grain field or fountain,
Only the clamor, the dust, and the heat.

Here thou art dozing,
Sadly reposing,
Hiding thy head 'neath a poor prisoned wing ;
Dreaming of heaven,
Whence thou wast riven,
And all the glad light and the glory of spring.

TO A CAGED BOBOLINK IN THE CITY. 7

Sweet little lover,
Scenting the clover,
Brushing the dew-drops in dreams from the spray,
Where are thy loved ones ?
Where are thy lost ones ?
Mournful, I ween, is thy poor captive lay.

O it was needless,
This act so heedless,
To prison thee here in a dull city room ;
Hostage of gladness,
Given to sadness,
Born out of sunlight and music and bloom.

See, he is waking,
His pinions shaking,
And out pours a flood-tide of melody bright ;
Now it is rushing,
Gurgling and gushing,
Like the clear stream of the soul's pure delight.


O the sweet feeling,
Rippling and reeling,

Tipsy with glee as it pours from his heart !
 Naught can I summon,
 Divine or human,
To paint, sweet enchanter, all that thou art.

 Steeped in contentment,
 Naught of resentment
Lurks in the bliss of thy rollicking strain ;
 Spurning thy durance,
 With perfect assurance
That only to live is an infinite gain.

 Blessed forerunner
 Of changeless summer,
Ecstasy's home is thy dear little breast ;
 Tell me thy secret,
 Canst thou reveal it ?
Tell me, O tell me, why thou art blest.

 Then shall these places
 Blossom with graces,
Where I have sighed so long to be free ;
 Sharing thy spirit,
 All joy to inherit,
Captive, O then, shall captivity be.



LOST.

WHERE art thou, little maid,
Where hast thou gone,
What path of darksome shade,
What breeze of song
Has caught my little maid,
In the May weather
O answer, little maid,
Say whither, whither ?

Like the young fairy hope,
Late thou wast skipping
Thy pretty circled rope,
Or lightly tripping
Down the long garden walks,
'Twixt tall white lilies
And varied hollyhocks
And daffadillies.

Thou wert the chosen queen
Of all the flowers :

Larkspur, that harlequin,
Served in thy bowers ;
And Fleur-de-Lis, thy knight,
Knelt at thy knee,
Ere he went forth to fight
For love of thee.

The sunshine would hold thee
To shower its kisses,
And oft it would fold thee
In ardent blisses.
Or it would slide and slip
Down to thy dimple,
And touch thy cherry lip
With a bright twinkle.

Where, O where hast thou gone ?
I hear thee never,
Never can catch thy song
In the glad weather,
That little bubbling lay,
Sweet overflowing
Of a young heart at play
That sang unknowing.

Say, hast thou swung thyself,
 Lightsome and airy
 Into the land of Elf,
 Kingdom of Fairy ?
 Did a breeze catch thee
 In its chase onward ?
 Did a fay snatch thee
 And bear thee sunward ?

Where are thy fancies,
 Thy romps and thy races,
 Thy wild gleeful dances
 And winsome graces
 When thou wert kin to all
 That joys in nature,
 Bird, bee, and insect small,
 Each happy creature ?

Under the village trees
 Maidens are pacing,
 Fairer are none than these,
 With arms inlacing.
 She with the golden locks,
 Soft shading to brown,

Bears she the fearless looks
Of my Thistledown ?

See how demurely
She heedeth her going,
Mark ye how surely
The bud has been blowing ?
All of the human
Dear nature has cherished,
Out of the woman
The fairy has perished.

Still she will bless the day,
The same though never ;
Gone is the lightsome May,
And breezy weather.
Like some old careless air,
Swift change of measure,
When I know not, or where,
Lost I my treasure.

THE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT.

BEFORE an altar was, or ever burned,
The groping soul of man aspired and yearned,
Walked with his Maker down the glowing East,
Nor wanted book or vestment, shrine or priest.

So through the guesses of the infant race,
All worships gross and hideous in their trace
Of idols coaxed with sacrificial blood,
Great Spirit, thou the soul of man hast wooed.

Oft on the viewless pinions of the wind
Thy whispers sought the ear of human kind ;
Over the desert and the lonely sea
Untutored minds looked up, O God, to thee.

Thy gospels writ upon the front of night
Are syllabled in stars of living light,
Thine where they shone when primal man surveyed,
And with a nameless rapture wept and prayed.

No golden beam e'er smites the island palm,
But bears thy message, ministers thy balm ;
No hairy savage dancing on the strand
But feels the touch of thine Almighty hand.

Shut from the churches, barred from out the fanes,
Thou walk'st, with silence shod, life's battle plains,
Till through the temple of a living soul
The matchless harmonies of worship roll.

Supernal spirit of a toiling world,
Thy wide, majestic pinions never furled,
Winnow the stagnant pools of earth away,
And bring a purer air, a brighter day.



THE STORKS OF DELFT.

THE bells clanged dread in every spire,
The watchman cried : " Fire ! fire ! fire ! fire !
Ho ! men of Delft, the city flames,
Run from your labors and your games ;
Ho ! rich and poor, haste for your lives,
Snatch your dear children and your wives,
The bed-rid, aged, sick, and blind,
The idiot and insane of mind,
Then think of household goods and gear,
Rich tapestries and flagons dear,
And plate wherewith your town makes cheer.
Run, burghers, for the flames are red ;
They hiss and crackle overhead,
And high above each lane and street
Hangs our brave city's winding-sheet."
And thus it chanced in Delft of fame
Lived many storks, that went and came,
Free from all harm, protected, blessed,
Because they cleared the city's pest—

Toads, frogs, and noisome creatures foul.
So wise a bird some gave a soul,
And scarce a man but reared a thatch
Whereon the little storks might hatch.
Now, on that fatal third of May,
When lurid clouds obscured the day,
With nestling birds just out of shell,
A strange and piteous thing befell.
Soft, downy, formless wing and head
They lay within the natal bed.
The parent birds quick saw their doom,
'Mid stifling smoke and sullen boom
Of falling roof and splintering wall,
And groan, and curse, and anguish call,
'Mid swaying crowds and rushing feet,
And furnace-blasts of withering heat,
And flying sparks like living things,
That bore destruction on their wings.
And first they sought in haste to bear
Their nurslings through the heated air.
But no, their strength may not suffice ;
They struggle, but they cannot rise,
And, panting back upon the nest,
They hide their young with wing and breast,



And calmly wait the fiery wave
To lay them in a common grave.
The flying crowds with wonder saw
A sight to fill the soul with awe,
Those birds that chose not life, but death,
To shield their young with latest breath ;
Mounting in love a funeral-pyre
They gave their bosoms to the fire.
And thus perchance the storks that day
Taught some poor craven heart the way
To stay his feet for those in need,
To help the weak, the sick to heed,
Remembering those old words, how writ :
“ Who saves his life shall forfeit it.”
Amid the records of the town
This tale is truly written down,
In letters of the purest gold
Such noble story well were told,
Of birds heroic in their death
Teaching Christ's truth with failing breath
And glazing eye and fluttering wing—
Those storks of Delft whereof I sing.

INDIAN SUMMER.

HAUNTED by tender preludes of the past,
The summer turns again to lay her ear
Along the drowsy earth. She fain would hear
Old songs hummed o'er, the murmurous drone of
bees,
The gurgling waters and the whispering trees,
Those vanished times that were not born to last.

The vocal earth hath lost her cheery tone,
And painted leaves whirl in the silent air ;
And still the waning year is wondrous fair.
With garments rustling downward to the ground,
She smiles benignly on the landscape round,
E'en while a modest hand unclasps her zone.

The naked limbs not e'en one nestling hold ;
The forest's hidden nooks are swept and bare,
And over all is spun the hazy air ;

That pale Delilah robs the sun of might,
His face is wan, his locks are thin and white ;
At evening he will flood the vale with gold.

These forest ways are like the cave of sleep,
Where gentians lure the color of the skies
To come and live within their fringed eyes,
And bleaching ferns are ghostly in the shade ;
And the stray nut falls as if half afraid ;
And whimpering rills have sobbed themselves to
sleep.

One moment, goddess fair, thou lingerest here,
With thoughtful brow downbent upon thy hand,
And a low sigh thrills through and through the
land ;
Thy kiss of peace is on the dreamy fields,
And soft languorous melancholy yields
Unto thy whisper "die in hope, not fear."

HEIMDALL.

[The Elder Edda is a collection of ancient ballads containing an account of the gods of Scandinavian and German mythology. It was made by the native priests of Iceland, who embraced Christianity about the end of the tenth century. Asenheim was the country of the gods, and Asgard was its principal city. Odin was the chief of the gods. Thor was the strongest of all the gods, and fought and conquered the giants with his great hammer. Baldur was the beautiful god of light and summer, who was slain by the malice of Loki, an evil spirit. Hænir was sometimes the companion of Odin and Loki on their clandestine visits to the earth.]

In the Elder Edda I read it,
That volume of wonder lore,
How Heimdall, a god of credit,
Was watchman at Heaven's door.

The sight of his eye was keenest
Of all in Asgard's towers,
For he saw, when earth was greenest,
Pale Autumn amid the flowers.

His ear was the best at hearing
Of all above or below ;
When the Spring-time's step was nearing,
He heard the grasses grow.

He heard the talk of the fishes
Deep down in the silent sea,
And even the unbreathed wishes
Of chick in its shell heard he.

He heard the feathers growing,
And wool on the old sheep's back,
And even the light cloud snowing
Far off on the sunbeam's track.

He knew what birds are thinking
That brood o'er the crowded nest,
Ere their fledgling's eyes are blinking,
And the song is warm in the breast.

And why were his senses keener
Than all in that magic clime,
Than Odin, and Thor, and Hænir,
And Baldur of Asenheim ?

I think—it is only guessing—
Heimdall was loving as wise,
And Nature who bent in blessing
Anointed his ears and eyes.

And should we but love undoubting,
Perchance, ah ! who can tell,
We might hear the corn-blade sprouting,
And the tiny leaf-bud swell.



DAWN.

SOME seraph kissed my lids apart,
And breathed into my ravished ears,
While down the ranges of the East
There fell the music of the spheres.

The young light shone o'er buds and leaves,
The drowsy-lidded flowers awoke,
And rapturous strains of forest birds
From out the dewy thickets broke.

Serene and still the green earth lay,
As in the shepherd patriarch's time,
With homely sounds of pastoral life,
And far the lowing of the kine.

As yet no sound of human toil
Fretted the silence of the field ;
The plough within the furrow stood,
And sleep refused the hind to yield.

All mortal pain was held in leash,
Ere wild unrest began to breathe ;
And for one moment I forgot
That man was born to sweat and grieve.

Oh, sacred hour when nature claims
The kingdom wrested from her hand,
And bears our weary spirits back
To Eden's fresh and virgin land !

APPLE BLOSSOMS.

SWEET darlings of the vernal air
Nestling your faces on the blue,
The rosy goddess, Eos fair,
With fond enchantment tinted you.

Upon a beam of morning light
She stole to kiss your modest lips,
And mixed the dawn with pearly white,
Where fell her beauteous finger tips.

Soft drops the envious clouds distil,
To meeken buds that blush too gay ;
And in the breath of coming ill
They seem to sigh, Ah, well-a-day !

A dancing nymph led on the spring,
And wove a garland for her hair,
Then lost it in the dizzy ring :
Poor blossoms ! lie and wither there.

Fond heart a springtime thou hast seen
Of heaven-sweet dewes and scented flowers ;
But quenched that budding raptures sheen,
Pale petals strew thy vernal bowers.

THE FISHER.

THE swells are long, the winds are fair,
My boat swings onward through the gale,
I drink the fountains of the air,
And list the rustling of the sail.

God plants the smooth, green waves beneath,
I reap the furrows of the sea,
And careless I though reaper Death
Ride the black storm cloud on my lee.

I love to feel the leaping boat
Stretch onward like an eager hound ;
My joyous soul is all afloat,
My thoughts know neither mete nor bound.

The curling wave dies and is born,
The spray flies off a snowy cloud ;
I laugh all landward care to scorn,
And lie within the stiffened shroud.

I love the gray encircling main
That climbs to meet the horizon's kiss ;
When flying o'er the ocean's plain
I yield me to a boundless bliss.

The gull that darts across my track
And shakes the glory from its wings,
Then melts into the cloudy rack,
In flight tells all my spirit sings.

The fish that glides beneath my keel
Through dim, pellucid, watery ways,
In lithesome motion can reveal
The rapture of my nights and days.

I change with every cloud that floats,
And with the changing shape of sails ;
The darkling and the sunward boats
To me are only fairy tales.

My craft seems but a living part
Of all I am and all I know ;
And like the tides in ocean's heart
My spirits strangely ebb and flow.



WOOD MOULD.


I.

UNNUMBERED summers lie within thy heart,
O fibrous mould, sweet with the violet's death ;
Long seasons unrecorded hide in thee,
And vesture of the forest manifold.
Thou art the heaped-up grave of countless flowers,
And red-cup mosses and quick-springing ferns,
Where mighty trunks of giants of the wood
Have crumbled down upon thy earthy couch,
The seed-plot and the tomb of living things.
So were all groves to wither thou wouldst hold
The potency of life within thy breast ;
All vanished glories of the forest fade
To the same semblance, indistinguishable
In thee, the brown alembic of the earth.

II.

There is a matrix of our human race
Where all that was passes and is no more ;

But potencies remain and powers of being,
And out of mouldered lives new impulse springs ;
New art, new systems, and new hopes of man.
Old laws decay, old customs, and old faiths ;
But in decay lies all the future's growth.
For hidden as the seed within the soil
Bourgeons the good of times as yet unborn.
There is no separate life, nor yet alone
Draw we a single breath ; but for the whole
We live and for the whole we die.
But God is great, and somehow, who can tell ?
May He pluck out the immortal from the dust.



TO THE UPPER AU SABLE LAKE.

FAIR vase, what beauteous nymph is thine,
Pouring her lustral sacrifice ?
What tender maiden half divine
Imbrues these waves and paints these skies ?

The easy lap of many hills
Forms a recess where thou dost hide ;
Thou hast thy birth in countless rills,
The veins of this pure crystal tide.

Shaggy the lover who enfolds
Thy shining limbs in his embrace ;
A Polypheme, a Titan bold,
Who frights thee with his frowning face.

But o'er the serried belts of pine
Thy hills of rose and beryl glow,
And crowding peaks in glory climb
To fling their image far below.

Within thy still and glassy round
Thou dost reflect the perfect whole,
As if thy face couldst mirror sound,
Or stay the passing of a soul.

Thine is the joy of trackless ways,
The secrets of these unknown glens ;
Thy forest psalm of months and days
Repeats hosannas and amens.

Responding to the upper sphere
Like some grand chorus or refrain ;
Each floating cloud to thee so dear,
Loses in naught for all thy gain.

Set in the untamed, savage woods,
Thou still canst civilize all hearts ;
Thy grace in ever shifting moods
Would teach the fairest of the arts.

Thou art so magical a thing
That one could weep to celebrate
Thy beauty, or in rapture sing
The power that thee didst consecrate.



The fragrant spirit of the wild
Didst nurse thee in its constant arms ;
Thou art a lost seraphic child,
And nature grieves o'er thine alarms.

Or thou art like a bliss that fled
Long years ago before our face,
Some sacred joy deemed cold and dead
Shines in thee with an added grace.

Pilgrims might wend from eastern land,
And find naught holier than this ground ;
Not Mecca's shrine nor Jordan's strand
Shall speak of God with thy clear sound.

THE HERB-SELLERS.

Two little maids trudged through the town,
With feet and ankles bare and brown,
And baskets poised for half the day,
Crying : "Fresh herbs to sell ! Hay ! hay !"

And one was vexed and did complain :
"This basket's weight will crush my brain.
The careless housewives hurry past,
While sage and parsley wither fast.

"The sun it burns, the dust it blinds ;
And many folk of many minds
Toss o'er my herbs and will not buy,
Though, hoarse and faint, I ever cry."

The other smiled, with face serene.
"I bear," she said, "an evergreen,
A little plant, atop the load,
That helps me o'er the weary road."


"And what may be this magic plant,
Whose virtues you so praise and vaunt ?
Can mint or thyme the bearer bless,
Or marjoram or water-cress ?"

"Nay," said her mate. "'T is but a weed,
A poor and humble thing, indeed ;
A growth proud folk but seldom wear,
For it is neither gay nor fair."

"But tell me where the weed is found,
And I will go and search the ground.
I'll tend it better than a rose,
If it will bring my back repose."

"We call it Patience ! Simple thing !
For it the whole round year is spring.
Scant in its bloom nor bright of eye,
Still it can frost and heat defy.

"It grows on any rood of soil
Where men must suffer, wait, and toil ;
It grows for all who serve and heal,
And find in love life's precious weal."



ENTRANCED.

SHE walks the earth and gently draws
Her life from strange and hidden laws.
This scene to her is but a show,
A vapor film, a wreath of snow,
A stain upon the glass of Time
Through which she views some fairer clime.
All that to us is vague ideal,
To her is solid, firm, and real.
Upon a shifting screen are cast
The figures that endure at last,
The archetype, and primal form
That slipped aside when man was born.
All things are taught her in a show
Of varied sights that come and go ;
And while we toil and grope and plod,
She views the living art of God.
As Dante saw the hells uncloze,
And heaven expanding like a rose,
Thick o'er her now the visions stream,

Like motes within a shifting beam ;
And here entranced with upward gaze
She sees the darting glory-rays,
And feels the brooding of the dove
O'ershadow her with perfect love.
Her soul, on tiptoe for the light,
Leans with a passionate delight,
And in some stronger ecstasy,
Will slip beyond and leave the clay,
Like a forgotten garment lost
Beside the streamlet she has crossed.
As birds at evening dart and run,
And melt into the setting sun,
Her rare, sweet being we may miss,
But heaven will glow with added bliss.

CLOVER FIELDS.

WHAT an ardent lover
The sky is to the earth,
When the bee, a rover,
Sucks the honeyed clover,
And June is winged with mirth !
Down it stoops its azure,
Glorious without measure ;
And white clouds curdled lie,
Anchored fleets on high.
Shadows chase each other
O'er the blowing clover ;
And the sea-wind agile
Bends the grasses fragile,
Stealing and coquetting,
Dancing and curvetting,
Kisses giving, taking,
Sense of rapture waking.
Then the hillside meadow
Shines in sun and shadow,

And the rose-tipped blossoms
Ope their scented bosoms.
The hilltop ripples gleam,
Floods of odor stream,
While the loud lark whistles
From the fence where thistles,
Mullein, dock, and cherry,
And the wild blackberry,
Make a pretty dingle.
Dainty bird-notes tingle ;
For the trill of thrushes
Steals from out the bushes,
Like some living sweetness,
Some supreme completeness,
Of Nature's good. And the clover shaking,
All its odors waking,
Sends its fond beguiling,
Like some tender, smiling
Rosy maid, who brings the south
In the kisses of her mouth,
And has entered, how we cannot see,
Into the deep heart of poesy.
This odor once was treasured,
And carefully was measured

In God's own still,
Where he works his will,—
The alembic of the clods,
And the grassy sods,
Which the plow turns under
In those days of wonder,—
April days of growing,
When his thought is glowing
In the bosom of the ground,
And all is done without a sound.
Then he made this meadow scent
For June's holy sacrament,
Of all good scents the mother,
This honey scent of clover ;
When the wind sways its heads
Freshened to glowing reds,
And the sun sends golden fires,
To feed its quick desires,
Wet by impetuous showers
And bursting into flowers.
And yet the world is woful, so we say ;
And yet the world is sad,
Though the clover fields are glad,
And the good God seems not far away.



TO THE WHITE-THROATED FINCH.

O PRETTY bird, so fleet and small,
Why speed'st thou to the mountain side ?
Say dost thou hear thy nestling's call
O'er all the moorland lone and wide ?

O little bird, a speck thou art
' Mid blue infinities of sky ;
Thou hast a compass and a chart
Within that bright and anxious eye.

Thy bosom pants beneath its vest
Of silver plumage gray and white,
And winging onward toward the nest,
Shy warbles drop from out thy flight.

“ Hush ! birdies, hush ! lie close and still,
And in your dogwood cradle swing ;
Your hungry mouths shall have their fill,
For here is supper on the wing.”

And thus the timid mother speeds
Throughout the desert wastes of air,
Nor coming storm nor tempest heeds :
Love is her shield and all her care.




EXCURSIONS.

THESE late autumnal days
I tread the city's ways :
Where countless myriads stream
I walk as in a dream.
The mighty roar and strife,
The ceaseless jar of life,
No thought or musing yields—
My heart lives in the fields.
Some opening in a cloud
Hath snatched me from the crowd ;
Some bright, alluring ray
Hath led my soul away.
Like a fond gossip bent
To give her child content,
I walk a wondrous land,
With Nature hand in hand.
The long gray woodland aisles
Greet me with sober smiles ;
The brown leaves round my feet


Send up their welcome sweet ;
The very earth is good,
And, rightly understood,
The clod a voice shall lend
To call you brother, friend.
Hushed is the air around,
With not a breath of sound
Save where the carved cup
Its acorn yieldeth up ;
Or woodcock, chuckling lone,
Drums where its mate has flown.
How fine the branches lie
Against a smoky sky,
With here a little rift,
Just as the vapors drift,
To show a spray of red
Upon the oak's tall head.
Sculptured are all the stems,
Like branches cut in gems,
And soft the soothing gray
Steals restless cares away,
And sheds a tender charm,
The spirit's healing balm.
Ah ! sweet this after-thought



Of all that summer brought ;
This trembling of the string
When earth has ceased to sing ;
This slender thread of gold,
Through colors sparse and cold ;
A little azure glint,
A little ray and hint
Of glad midsummer's blue,
With cloudland smiling through.
How good the friendly trees !
How fair their knotted knees !
In bark though scarred it be,
A kindly face I see.
And then I ask if kin
Of mine ere dwelt therein.
Some fibre in my frame
Would own the sylvan claim.
Pent in yon gnarled oak,
So bent and thunder-broke,
A spirit seems to strive
To free itself and live.
Some days the upward strain
Of Nature 'gainst her chain,
Some days the dim desire



To seek and to aspire
Of all this mighty show
Thrills like a note of woe—
A chorus of the floods,
Voices of winds and woods :
Rocks in upheaval cry,
The ground-swells moan and sigh ;
No voice of beast or bird,
But some deep yearning stirred—
Monitions of the whole
That seeks a living soul.
Our humble kin talk then—
The trees that would be men.
And thus I fled the street
And sought mine own retreat.
Five seconds e'en, or more,
Amid the city's roar,
But now I thread the crowd—
They chat and laugh aloud.
They flood the marts to buy
All that the looms supply.
Who cares or inly grieves
That life must shed its leaves.



JOY AND SORROW.

OLD Sorrow came prepared to take his leave,
Equipped for travel on the roads of night.
So long had he abode, I ceased to grieve,
And saw him slowly change from gray to white.

Still was I loath that such old friends should part ;
His chastened aspect seemed abiding rest ;
His place within my ever constant heart
Was consecrate, a temple in the breast.

No thought of pleasure could I entertain,
So loud and garish came the revel's sound.
Though Sorrow fain would go, there was no train
Of Mirth whereunto I was wooed or bound.

So Peace, the angel, came and said : " Be still.
Keep that one chamber sweet with balm and nard ;
If the world throng your bosom at its will
All hope of Joy you must for aye discard.

“For Joy is not the shallow thing you know ;
Joy is the wisest of the sons of God—
With Love he bides, and e’en must enter so
After the mighty scourging of the rod.”

A VISITANT.

SWEET spirit, that abideth all the day,
How blesséd are the thoughts thy presence brings,
With thy strange light and lambent glory ray,
Thou gildest homely fare and common things.

Thou dost companion all my lonely hours,
And fill the spaces where dull care would dwell,
Commissioned to thy task by genial powers,
I yield me to a sweet entrancing spell.

Thou art not Sympathy with symboléd dove,
Nor dear Compassion with her melting eyes,
Thou com'st I know not whence, around, above,
Beyond the circle where experience lies.

From far-off places where the soul in vain
Has tried to enter with its peering thought,
Stealing like odors after gentle rain,
All unannounced thy coming and unsought.

No honored visitant to courts of kings
E'er matched the shining of thy starry face,
The calm of distant spheres thy presence brings,
The large benignity of boundless space.

Thou hast the motion of the sun and moon,
The dignity and pose of regal time ;
Where were thy garments wove, in what strange
loom ?
Where didst thou learn that mien and air sub-
lime ?

Art thou the muse from her high mossy seat ?
Art thou the glory of our common life ?
Art thou ideal beauty come to greet
The toilers in this long unlovely strife ?

I know thee not, thy station or thy name,
Nor seek to know, breathing such keen delight ;
Go if you will and even as you came,
Your presence here shall leave a wake of light.

MILESTONES.

THE SOUL TO ITSELF.

" MILES twenty from the start,
And fifty from the end,
How art thou, jocund heart ? "
" O, bravely, dear old friend."

" Miles forty to the west,
And I a stalwart man :
Now seems the place of rest,
Back there where life began.

" And can I never pause
To count the loss and gain,
To seek aside the cause
Or flee the coming pain ?

" But thirty miles to go,
And this the place of graves,
With footsteps in the snow
Made by old toilsome slaves.

“ And some within my ken
On God and angels call,
And some are silent men,
Who never speak at all.

“ And some there are who say
The world was made by chance,
And some who mourn and pray,
And some who feast and dance.

“ And all the land is bare
Save where the visions rise,
And smiles my maiden fair
With lovelight in her eyes.

“ She who has slept so well
For thirty years or more,
Down in a mossy dell,
Close by the sounding shore.

“ But twenty miles to grope ;
Some hands I used to clasp
Have loosened on this slope ;
I do not feel their grasp.



"Now ten miles through the gray
And darkness coming down,
The light fades swift away,
And still no friendly town.

"And what beyond the last,
That milestone at the end,
Or gravestone overpast,
Whose knowledge can befriend ?

"And must we forward speed
Beyond the anywhere,
And find no help at need
Save some poor formless prayer ? "

"Thou canst not stand and wait
To peer on the unknown ;
Pass through the mystic gate
Where each must tread alone."

"But on the other side
Beyond this little isle,
Beyond the great divide,
Say, may we rest awhile ? "

A PORTRAIT.

So thou hast passed into the light !
They broke the news this very day ;
Still beams thine eye so softly bright,
Thy smile half tender and half gay.

The worldly precepts thou didst know
Were held in such a gentle guise,
No man could ever call thee foe,
And all allowed thee good and wise.

But virtue of the sterner school
Was e'er to thee an unknown thing ;
Thou couldst not live by formal rule,
But loved and wrought as robins sing.

Kinder than all the world beside,
And e'en more tolerant of wrong,
Not blindly, but full open-eyed,
Thy footsteps pressed amid the throng.

A stalwart man, thou still didst wear
The aspect of a tranquil child,
With scattered locks of silver hair
About a forehead large and mild.

Thy sweet, slow speech, it echoes still,
With head half bent and listening ear,
As though the words came not at will,
But breathed what thou didst inly hear.

Too reverent for sect or creed,
And loving best the open air,
No narrow plan could fill the need
Of one whose life was praise and prayer.

Too human for a bounded view,
All days and hours took form divine,
And paced in deep'ning glory through
The universe, thy chosen shrine.

And I have seen thee come and go,
About thy small ancestral fields,
Rejoicing in the rain and snow,
Each aspect which the season yields.

And I have seen thee pluck a flower,
And muse upon it for a while,
Soul-bowed before an unseen power,
Its brightness passed into thy smile.

How dearly thou didst love the scene !
How simple was thy lifelong joy
In trout-brook and in pasture green,
Where thou hadst wandered when a boy !

We saw them through thy kindly eyes,
Like some fair picture in a book,
Now tree and rock in mute surprise,
Miss thee with sad and altered look.

No shade of doubt e'er crossed thy life,
Or bowed thee with the fear of night ;
Unscourged by turmoil, pain, and strife,
Thy spirit passed from light to light.



THE VEERY.

As up the mountain side I pressed
I heard the veery's vesper song,
Poured warm from out his glowing breast,
And echoing the glades along :
Tir-lee, tri-lee, tri-lee, the strain,—
Fond love, and hope, and tender pain.

The evergreens their odors gave
To load the fresh'ning western breeze,
And, fed from many a mountain cave,
The brook sped downward through the trees :
Tir-lee, tri-lee, tri-lee, the song ;
And rock and woodland echoed long.

The slender birches gently swayed ;
Their milky stems rose spectral fair ;
Around their roots, with vines arrayed,
Grew red-tipped moss and maidenhair ;
And tir-a-lee, tri-lee was poured—
A liquid stream of soft accord.

Dark rose the cedar's spiral form
On that pellucid northern sky,
A clear expanse of color shorn,
A lake of ether to the eye ;
And, like that clearness, tir-a-lee
Sang the lone bird upon the tree.

The dusky stems of lofty pines
Are spaced with visions of the hills ;
Blue harmonies in melting lines
And winding vales the picture fills ;
And still the bird note seems to pray,
Like one who seeks the narrow way.

The cattle hid in distant dells
Wade deep through dank and dewy brake,
And tinklings from their far-off bells
Sound o'er the bosom of the lake ;
But higher still the veery's lay
Floats like a cloud of melody.

BUDDHIST PRAYER.

My God, I feel thy calm, sweet love
 Environ heart and soul in bliss ;
Bring in the joy of saints above
 And clasp my spirit with a kiss.

Bathed in a stream of perfect rest,
 As in some tropic Indian sea,
I would forget that I am blest,
 Nor know of aught save only thee.

Folded as close within thy care
 As mothers clasp their babes at night,
My being through this sphere shall wear
 And blend with thy celestial white.

One thought of thee, and thou dost come
 As noiseless as the stellar ray ;
I yearn to thee, and find my home
 As drops melt in the ocean spray.

Beyond the region where we know
And meditate upon thy will,
Unstayed, unchecked my soul shall go,
And bid old joys and pains be still.

It is not death, but life set free,
That loses all its selfhood's guile,
To live in God eternally
As on some beauteous face a smile.

Thy life is mine. It floods the heart,
Beats in the pulses and the brain.
Thy life is mine. I am a part
Of God, freed from the conscious chain.



AT EVENING.

A PRAYER exhales from out the wood,
The prayer of Nature to her God,
And in this low and purple glade
The strolling herds pause half afraid ;
So deep the peace, so deep the rest—
An infant on its mother's breast,
With even pulses breathing balm,
Can image forth the perfect calm.

The light has waned to crystal clear,
A luminous and perfect tear
Upon the pallid cheek of night
Seems softly trembling into white,
And lo ! on the horizon's marge
Their glows a planet fair and large.
Above the vault is passion pale,
Where streamed the sunset's fiery trail.

From dewy glens and thickets dank,
With thymy herbs and flow'rets rank,

Small furry things steal out to trace
Their paths upon the dripping grass ;
And nestlings, restless in their sleep,
Awake to stir and softly cheep,
While glowworm tapers flare and gleam
On forest altars dimly seen.

Forth from her azure cave of space
The moon reveals a sainted face,
And weaves her thin and filmy veil ;
Over the woodland and the dale.
She steals the cloak of glowing green,
And drops a robe of silver sheen ;
And fleet of foot she gently glides
Where Memory lurks, and Echo hides.

Within this hushed and sacred hour
The silence blossoms like a flower,
And color melts unseen away,
And leaves the silver and the gray ;
So thought gives place to vague content,
The soul of music twined and blent
With reveries dim and pleasing throng,
A soundless chant, a wordless song.



The mountains bend to lesser height
Beneath the majesty of night—
An awestruck circle, hand in hand,
A linked and mighty praying band.
And we, too, light the inner shrine
To worship here the All-divine ;
When consciousness his throne reveals,
Within its fane the spirit kneels.

BARNEGAT LIGHT.

FAR down the coast, when daylight fails,
A little ray gleams on the sight,
For sixty miles it glows and pales,
Dies out, then flashes ruby light.

Here on the margin of the sea
I watch that ray with keen desire,
And something sad comes over me
When fogs have screened its gleaming fire.

So luminous its message shows
Across the welter of the dark,
The ship that comes, the ship that goes,
Finds providence in that red spark.

Above the long sad waste of shore,
Where seamews wing their eager flight,
The beacon rules the ocean's roar,
The beacon rules the awesome night.

Hope gleams in that revolving star,
And courage wakes within its ray,
And out across the harbor bar
It flings the safety of the day.

So through the mists, or o'er the sea,
We wait the seer's, the poet's flame,
The prophet who is yet to be,
The strong of heart, and large of brain.

On some bold headland ere we know
Shall burn the radiant-fronted sage,—
The guide to souls tossed to and fro,
The beacon of a better age.

MILKWEED.

SMALL spinner of the fields,
Where are thy fairy reels ?
Thy busy spindles fine,
To mesh this silken twine ?

I know thy distaff green,
Fretting the satin sheen,
Of thread more delicate
Than wrought Ulysses' mate.

The laces from thy loom,
This poor and common bloom,
Would deck Titania's trail,
Or Queen Mab's bridal veil.

Thou art all fantasy,
Like some fond poet—he
Who from his heart untwines
The stuff of mazy rhymes.

Wingéd his songs shall go
The wide world to and fro,
As thou dost wing thy seeds
Out of thy being's needs.

At nature's still behest,
Is spun thy downy breast,
To thin and silky sails
That catch the autumn gales.

And through the air I see
Thy little colony
Voyaging in azure space
To magnify thy race.

But canst thou ever guess
The need of toil and stress,
Why thou the livelong day
Shouldst spin thy heart away ?

Nay, instinct blind and slow,
That way the sap doth go,
By some mysterious path
In thee hath turned to faith.



TO SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

AND hast thou flitted to some brighter sphere,
Like a rare bird long weary on the wing,—
Thou who didst ever dwell so fondly near
The source of life and songs' perennial spring?

Lightsome in footfall when the years had sped,
As some glad child at play beside a stream,—
Far from thy presence age and winter fled,
And all the world was rosy with thy dream.

Who that has felt the welcome of thy smile,
Or touched thy hand, a rose leaf in the palm,
Who that has known thee loving without guile,
But folds thy memory in nard and balm?

Unlike all beings of this later time,
Purer and finer in the fragile mould,
Fashioned to breathe a more ethereal clime,
Or to dwell backward in the age of gold;

Still hung thy love undimmed, a silver star
Upon the clouded night of one whose fame
Beamed strange and lurid o'er the world afar ;
And thy meek heart did fondly shield his name.

And ever simple in thy household ways,
None knew the magic or the secret charm
That crowned with vernal blooms thy latter days ;
Some blest ideal kept thee free from harm.

Sweet saint, we follow not where thou hast sped
Into the deepening heaven of joy and love,
Perchance God took thee when thy spirit fled,
And soothed thee like a gentle, fluttering dove.

JOY AFTER SORROW.

BREAK in, thou splendors of the soul,
And light the land and sea ;
O shades of gloom, now backward roll
And leave the prospect free.

Unveil the glories of the sense,
And all thy raptures bring ;
Let life disclose its recompense,
And spirit soar and sing.

Here from the mountain top discern
The blessings where they stand ;
Complaint and sighing now unlearn,
And greet the lovely band.

The lambent flames of morning play
About thy favored head ;
For thee the noontide gilds its ray,
And evening paints in red.

The common good pure and serene,
Just as the common light,
Enfolds and twines its braided sheen,
And trembles into white.

O ecstasy to live and move—
To know a being here,
Abiding on unchanging love,
Without one shade of fear.

The bliss that glows within a star,
And dyes the flow'ret's bloom,
Brings love and mercy from afar,
And gives our joyance room.

The ways of God we understand,
Translate the hidden part ;
In secret doth his tender hand
Bind up our ev'ry smart.

No life so piteously crost,
No parched and blackened plain,
But, waiting for God's Pentecost,
Shall feel the touch of rain.

TO A TEAR-CUP FOUND IN AN ANCIENT
TOMB.

THE hands that laid thee by their sacred dead
Have changed and changed in æons of old time,
Have lived in moss and daisies tipped with red,
O'er buried ruins of an Eastern clime.

Where the kids gambol round a shattered wall,
And aimless columns climb the wondrous blue,
Is heard the shepherd's pipe and drowsy call
The long still hours of summer daylight through.

And lost is now the story of that race
Whose buried heroes nourish blades of grass,
Whose monarchs sleep beneath the feeding place
Of flocks that o'er their thrones and sceptres pass.

For with unbridled malice Time did spurn
And trample down proud cities of the plain,
Not sparing e'en one wrought and pictured urn,
Whereon we read a legend or a name.

But thou, O little cup of slender mould,
Hast strayed from out a tomb to seek the day ;
The very tears, perchance, that thou didst hold
Turned to strange rainbow hues that o'er thee
play.

For Nature, thrifty e'en of grief and woe,
Hath husbanded the drops from ancient eyes,
And wrought her miracle and magic show
Out of the proofs of long-forgotten sighs.

And cunningly she doth the symbol save,
And ply her chemic force in realms of death,
And cunningly within the mouldering grave
Transforms old griefs to vital joy and breath.

And thou, O little vase of mystic dyes,
Hast wandered far to seek an alien hand ;
Far from thine Eastern calm and classic skies
Into a new and strangely garish land.

And musing on this sign of buried woes,
And wondering who was he or she that wept,
I place within thee now a half-blown rose,
Fresh as the lips of Eos when she slept.

For nature's wrecks and man's make pasture fair
For gentle herds that roam the verdant plain,
And not one sign of joy or beauty rare,
But blossoms out of death and ancient pain.



AT THE FARM.

BLITHELY up the lane
Came Janet and her beau,
While the soft spring rain
Fell on all below.

“What ’s the time of day ? ”
Asked Janet of her beau,
“Good for love and May
And for things that grow.”

“But I should be home
Tending to the loaves ;
You should cease to roam,
Milking of your droves.”

“Leave the loaves to bake,
Let the herds go stray,
Just for love’s sweet sake
Was made love’s day.”

“Nay, but care will come,
Love me, love me not ;
If the loaves should burn,
Sad would be my lot.

“They would scold me sound ;
Tell me, tell me, pray
If by love you 're bound,
What 's the time o' day ? ”

“'Neath the budding bough,
In a lover's kiss,
I tasted, so I vow,
Eternity of bliss.

“Linger with good will.
Do not frown or mock ;
Churlish Time stands still
On a lover's clock.”



THE ROAD.

" O LIST, old man, old man so gray,
Creeping along the rugged ground,
Dost know the road that runs this way,
And can good inns and cheer be found ? "

" I know the road, O well I know,
Blithe youth so gay and debonair ;
I 've traversed it in rain and snow,
In weather foul and weather fair."

" And list, old man, old man so gray,
Where shall I rest when night comes down ?
Canst guide me, at the close of day,
To friendly cot or busy town ? "

" I 'll guide thee, youth, O youth so fair,
Far down into a shady glen,
And we will lie and slumber there,
Amid the bones of buried men."


“ Old man ! old man ! so thin and gray,
The wind can blow thee from the height,
I shudder in the open day ;
Art thou a wraith that walks in light ? ”

“ Who and what am I ? none can know,
Not e’en the dread and fateful three ;
But to the valley I will go
And lie alone this night with thee.”

“ And shall we rise when planets pale,
And climb the long and sunny slope ;
Canst see the road beyond the vale ;
Old man, hast thou a certain hope ? ”

“ The road that leads from out the glade
Was never scanned by mortal eye.
But come and haste, be not afraid ;
Soon thou shalt know this mystery.

“ Can he partake of hidden rite
Who passes not the temple veil ?
Only the gross who walk by sight,
Beat on their breasts and loudly wail.”



“ Ah ! now beneath the mask of death,
I know thee for the priest of life.
Lead on, old man—I yield my breath ;
For who with thee can join in strife ? ”

SUMMER MIDNIGHT.

HUSHED is the earth as if some mystic word
Had thrilled far through the deeps of purple sky,
Or it were shaken with a goddess' sigh ;
Pale Ariadne in her slumbers stirred,
Or sad Ænone's faint, tender moan was heard
Freighting the night wind as it wandered by
With breathings of the pine hills far and nigh.
The moon hangs sad and large, as if deterred
From passing o'er the line by tender ruth
Because earth shrinks from deep and perfect dark,
Nor yet can joy to welcome in the lark—
Dreads like the soul eclipsed and hid from truth :
Long slant her beams upon the dewy grass,
And the heaven grows sweet and clear to see her
pass.



MORNING.

CLAP your wings, O doves,
Clap your snow-white wings ;
For the morning comes with rejoicing,
And the great earth sings.

The light streams over the wood
And over the town,
The spruce and hemlock wood
So sullenly brown.

It broke from a smoky cloud
A curtain of gray,
It broke with a kind of cheer
In a red rose ray.

The river ran molten gold,
And the sails caught fire,
And the flame leaped up and aloft
To the tall church spire.

The doves they circled and rose
As feathers are tossed,
And one was burning in light
Where dark lines crossed.

And the factory windows blazed,
In yon wall so long,
Like a house some poet has reared,
Some palace of song.

Thick studded with pearl and gold
The town lay piled ;
Opal in every pore,
Its ugliness smiled.

The bell chimed sweet that morn
In the belfry high,
As if all sorrow must pass
In a long-drawn sigh.

And the hidden pang was soothed
By the palm of light,
And now the invalid slept
Who had tossed all night,



And turned the Ixion wheel
 Why evil must be,
Cheated with snatches of dream
 Of a life made free,

As the doves, which clap their wings
 And flutter in flocks,
While little waves crisp and run,
 And the sail-boat rocks.



BUDDHA.

GOTÁMA sat beneath a tree,
With thoughts upon Nirvána bent,
And there a happy mother came
In posture low and reverent.

The sage she worshipped for a god,
Who lived within that sylvan shade,
And of her simple rice and milk
A grateful offering to him made.

This tree to seek, in years gone by,
She oft would wend her lonely way,
And for a husband and a son
Unto the god in secret pray.

Now granted every fond desire,
And shrined within a happy fate,
She came to pay her pious vow,
With lightsome step and heart elate.

Gotáma ceased to gaze afar
 Upon abstractions of the air ;
He looked into that tender soul ;
 Humanity was mirrored there.

One instant an ecstatic thrill
 Seized on his vast prophetic mind ;
The dreamer cast aside his dream,
 And woke the lover of his kind.

And then Gotáma ceased to be,
 And Buddha lit the lamp of faith,
To teach and bless a wretched race,
 That moved his pity strong as death.

Great souls who through the ages shine,
 He lives amid your starry band,
A planet of the Orient sky
 That gleams o'er many a storied land.

SOLITUDE.

ACROPOLIS of rest in solemn hours,
Great city of the silent and the lone,
Ye rear on high your heaven-communing towers,
And build yourself anew though oft o'erthrown.

Invisible old keep so cool and gray,
What august dignity ye lend to life !
Ye hold the hostage of each weary day,
The promise unto peace of toil and strife.

Your walls are decked with banners hardly won
From silent victories within the breast,
And poets here oft seek the rising sun,
As song birds build upon a mountain crest.

Your alleys lead to vision and to prayer ;
The prophet's cry breaks from your Delphic walls,
And conflicts winnowing this earthly air
Were fought at first about your sacred walls.

Within your council-house sit shapes of dread,
Terror, Remorse, and Retribution dire,
Here the great drops of penitence were shed
Amid a cleansing purgatorial fire.

Here Thought abides within your frescoed room
And fair Philosophy is pacing slow ;
Here stand ideals in their rosy bloom,
And shapes of greatness ever come and go.

PEACE.

IN quiet hours the tranquil soul
Reflects the beauty of the sky,
No passions rise or billows roll,
And only God and heaven are nigh.

All ruder feelings hushed to sleep,
There steals a sweetness o'er the breast,
As breezes die upon the deep
And Nature folds herself to rest.

No wish is breathed, no prayer is said,
We hover like a holy dove,
Serenely glad with pinions spread,
Poised in the golden light of love.

The tides of being ebb and flow,
Creating peace without alloy ;
A sacred happiness we know,
Too high for mirth, too deep for joy.

Like birds that slumber on the sea,
Unconscious where the current runs,
We rest on God's infinity
Of bliss, that circles stars and suns.

His perfect peace has swept from sight
The narrow bounds of time and space,
And looking up with still delight
We catch the glory of his face.

HIGH PASTURES.

AN August morn that lights the mountain lands
With the soft peacefulness of low hung clouds,
And tender gray in thick and swathing bands,
Screens the sun's heat and all its lustre shrouds.

We mount the lofty pasture sweet with thyme,
In grassy hollows and 'twixt granite rocks
Where far the sheep-bells gently swell and chime,
And sound the nibbling teeth of tranquil flocks.

Here sit upon the sward and court the air,
Perfumed with mint and with the odorous fern ;
See where the lakelet lieth low and fair,
And the brook pours its waters like an urn.

Profoundly silent is the sober morn ;
Its winds are whist as if they dared not stir ;
Still drips the dew upon the lowland corn,
Nor starts the partridge with its sudden whir.

The immortelle is bleaching unaware ;
The mullein raises high its fretted spire ;
Along the sad stone fences bald and bare
The sumach breaks in freaks of vivid fire.

Why art thou lovely, sky of windless gray,
Ungainly pastures bleak and bowlder-strewn
Where lurks the charm of this pale August day,
The world's deep peace, and nature's undertone ?

O minor key, I love thy shaded light,
The hush and coolness of this thoughtful day,
So like our human lot, scarce dark or bright,
Only God's love behind a sky of gray.

TWILIGHT DREAMS IN THE CITY.

I THOUGHT I saw her to-night,
Flitting amid the crowd,
A phantom airy and light
But not in her maiden shroud.

For she was dressed as of old,
My playmate of long ago,
With her hair of wavy gold
O'er a white gown's ripple and flow.

I saw her cleaving the throng
Like something wingéd and free,
Her motion a living song,
As she turned and beckoned to me.

When twilight is tender and gray
She came as a blissful dream,
And I saw a deep red ray
Low in the sunset gleam,


Between the encompassing walls,
And chimneys of dingy hue,
Where a filmy brightness falls,
In the haze of the evening blue.

I know where her grave was made,
Close to the churchyard wall,
Under a pine-tree's shade,
Where robins twitter and call.

From yon dark house on the hill
A path to the grave runs down,
To the voice of a whispering rill,
When twilight shadows are brown.

Downward an old man steals,
At the golden birth of the stars,
And there by the grave he kneels,
As they gleam through the cloudy bars.

He is gray with grief of time,
He is old with the thoughts that age,
He loved her in youth's fair prime,
And his life is a tear-stained page.



His feet through the grass have trod
A path to the churchyard wall,
Where his heart lies under the sod,
And the red pine needles fall.

Yes, here in the city throng,
I thought I saw her to-night
Flitting lightly along,
Clear in the fading light.

Amid the clamor of sound
I seemed to behold her face,
And the path through the churchyard ground
Gleamed in its lonely place.

And anon the lamps did glow,
And the chimes from yon tall spire
Made musical ebb and flow,
As if drawn in lines of fire.

A tempest of sweet accord,
Quivered over the throng,
As if the voice of the Lord
Were chanting his even-song.

TWILIGHT DREAMS IN THE CITY. 95


And an infinite peace above
The restless city was spread,
From the golden palace of love,
The rest of the blessed dead.

AUTUMNAL PICTURES.

I SEE the fields where cattle graze,
The hills soft meshed in silver haze,
The gold-brown brook and ancient bridge,
And old red mill beneath the ridge,
And dim lights on the orchard side
With moss-grown trees low branching wide ;
The hamlet nestled in the glade—
A drowsy nook that loves the shade ;
The dusty highway, long and brown,
Slow creeping out beyond the town
To breast the hillside in its strength,
A silent, treeless mile in length,
Far to the hanging woods on high
That with their verdure soothe the eye
With myriad dyes of dusky green
Decked in September's richest sheen.
O'er old stone walls the blackberry twines,
Inlaced with wanton gadding vines,
The clematis and wild fox-grape,

The shad-bush and the feathered brake,
And woodbine curled in cedar spire
That soon shall glow a line of fire ;
Nor darker could the elder gleam
With fruitage dipped in Stygian stream.
All freaked and splashed with guiltless blood,
The sumach flames along the wood,
And lifts its gay and pluméd crest
Like some old knight on high behest.
The mullein takes its lonely stand
Upon the hilly pasture land,
Where slow the cricket's voice is heard
Planning some monitory word.
The golden-rod from myriad whirls
Its sunny oriflamme unfurls,
And triumphs o'er the dusty way
Companioned by the thistle gay,
Broadening a disk so rosy fair
To feed the pretty birds of air.
And foremost, with a twittering note,
The dainty goldfinch swells its throat,
Sings in a thicket all untrod,
Or warbles in the ear of God.
Now 'mid the bushes all alive

The small, brown-bodied sparrows strive,
And sudden break from out the gloom
With wings that glance and whirr in tune ;
Then busy neighbors flock away
To gossip o'er their moving day.
The noontide warms the quiet air
With scent of apples spiced and rare,
And quinces by the mossy well
Feel in their veins old Midas' spell,
While clusters on the bronzing vine
Breathe out an odor half divine.
From thick embowered bosky trees
Comes soft the murmurous hum of bees.
Far off the golden stubble land
Lies in a warm and glowing band,
As if old earth, sunned through and through,
Had ripened to a richer hue,
And grown into a priceless thing,
Beneath the summer's cherishing.
Clouds mottled like the ringdove's breast
Move softly onward toward the west,
With rifts of deep and tender hue,
A nameless depth of gentian blue.
In perfect beauty, flush and sweet,



Dear Autumn comes with glowing feet ;
Her tanned cheek wears a sunset dye,
A laughing light is in her eye ;
About her shapely ankles brown
Swells out a modest russet gown.
With here and there a color dash,
A breast-knot of the mountain ash.
Her round arms globéd melons bear,
And scarlet leaves have crowned her hair.

A WINDY EVENING.

WILD storm that beat the leaves to earth
And left the forest stripped and bare,
Ruthless in your half savage mirth,
Earth's beauty mocks at your despair.

She rises in the evening light,
That yellow radiance of the West—
A Titaness of sacred might,
With sleep enfolded on her breast.

Black stand the trees in silhouette
With roadway pools of crystal clear,
Diamonds within a ring of jet
Flashing sky-colors far and near.

Now gently heaves the dusky lane
To where her robe is floating far,
That purple garment sheer as flame
Clasped sweetly by the evening star.

The winds have torn the veil of mist,
And scourged it with their wings away
Into the formless, void abyss,
Where Night shall send reluctant Day.

Some tatters strew the vault on high,
And stream like torches far and wide,
But they will fall to sparks and die,
E'en as the windy tempest died.

And still, O Titaness, thine eyes,
Like wells of being uncreate,
Beam ever through the crystal skies,
And draw me with the hand of fate.

Within thy garment ample wide,
All creatures seek a sheltering fold,
The lion in his savage pride,
The little nestling two hours old.

Save the shy creatures of the wood,
For all the timid have a care ;
Protecting mother, grand and good,
My heart yearns with a pagan's prayer ;

For once upon thy friendly knees
I played when still a thoughtless child,
After long tossing over seas
Give me thy blessing sweet and mild.



THE SPIRIT GUIDE.

FAR in the realm of Arctic night,
Where flames the weird auroral light,
And icebergs loom on every hand,
Enchanters of that lonely land,
The patient dark-skinned Esquimau
A little grave shapes in the snow.

And o'er the ice-plain bleak and wild,
The mourning mother bears her child,
In furry garment softly rolled,
Who ne'er again shall feel the cold,
And lays him on the icy breast,
To take his last and final rest.

And there beside the little mound,
The father slays his fleetest hound,
A creature of unerring skill,
Of keenest scent and docile will,
Companion of the toilsome chase,
The noblest of his noble race.

He lays the faithful beast and brave
Low down beside his baby's grave,
And says : " The little one will stray,
Through night and darkness far away ;
His tender feet have never trod,
And cannot find the path to God.

" Now guide him safe from night and cold,
Far out to realms of purest gold,
Where flow'ry meads and crystal streams
Are smiling in the sun's glad beams,
Where rise abodes of joy and mirth
And feasting fills the happy earth."

Consoled, the parents homeward wend,
And leave their baby to the friend
Who for protection and defence
Has proved a gentle providence,
Sure that the dog so good and wise,
Will find the gates of Paradise.

O love that would outrun the tomb,
And light your darlings through the gloom !



O simple faith that deems love's care
Can be a joy and solace there,
Ye live in each untutored soul,
And bind the tropics to the pole.

FILS DE LA VIERGE.


[The floating webs in the air which come with St. Martin's summer are called by the French *fil*s de la vierge].

IN the days of mild comfort for Summer's decline,
When all the trees drip with the Sacrament's wine,
And leaves whirl about in the bland tepid breath
Of the South that sighs over this beauteous death,
The Virgin sits high o'er the sphere of the earth
And spins to her moods both of sadness and mirth—
Spins to her thoughts of beginning and ending,
Spins to her dreams of soft twining and blending,
Spins to the motion of orbs in their rolling,
Spins to the far sound of bells in their tolling,
Spins to the vision of God in his glory,
Spins to the earth life so mixed in its story ;
Her moods o'er the Indian Summer are shed,
Her thoughts are twined into the silk of the thread.
Spin, Virgin, spin.

Softly her threads through the ether are faring,
Shot from the distaff their messages bearing,
Rising in puffs of this mild-breathing weather,
Holding above like a heavenly tether ;
Silver their shining as downward they wander,
And the good wealth of their fortunes they
squander.

Airy and lightsome the tissue is gleaming
Of all that the soul of the spinner is dreaming—
Flower-like visions and soft brooding splendor,
Love that heals wounds for the Summer's surrender,
Touches of mercy, chaste maidenly kisses,
Slip from her spindle like visible blisses,
Fall in the vapors and glow in the forest,
Heal with sweet patience where need is the sorest.
Spin, Virgin, spin.

Down they come slanting through bright woodland
mazes,
Down through the pearl of the valley's still hazes,
Down through the red and the gold in their gliding,
Russet and crimson of autumn's providing ;
Down where the gentian has opened its eyes
And smiled at its mother the blue of the skies,



Where on the upland lie fern patch and bowlder,
And the hills darkling purple push buttress and
shoulder ;

Down where the waters are smoky in showing,
And shadow and sunlight are coming and going ;
And soft is the earth-sigh for all it is losing,
And glad are the birds who the south-lands are
choosing ;

Then come the threads the Virgin is spinning,
And in them seem meshed the soft sound of her
singing.

Spin, Virgin, spin.

She has spun out all this fair golden weather,
Spun it and twined it to float like a feather ;
Woven of hopes to the hearts that are dearest,
Woven of memories fondest and nearest,
Peace for the restless and sleep for the weary,
Courage and comfort when long days are dreary ;
Here is the Kingdom of God in the showing,
Like the strange vision of Patmos all glowing,
Speaking of faith to the sad and the sighing,
Preaching of life to the sick and the dying.
So as she spins on the rim of the ocean,

And feels the earth glide in its gladness of motion ;
Sings she her song to the universe rhyming,
And sets all the spheres in harmonious chiming.
Spin, Virgin, spin.

THE POPPY WREATH.

THERE came an angel in the night,
When all the house was hushed to rest.
A star was shining o'er his hair,
A crown was clasped upon his breast.

To one who slept in dreamless ease
He bore the blooms of purple shade,
And, stooping, kissed the tranquil brow,
Just where the poppy wreath was laid.

With the first dawn we found him there,
Such noble quiet in his mien,
The morning light came stealing in,
As awe-struck by the wondrous scene.

Majestic death upon him lay,
The ermine and the honored state,
As if some office high and grave
Had oped for him the palace gate.

Thus the dark poppy wreath became
A victor crown in that last hour,
And all of courage, calm and great,
Shone 'neath the strange symbolic flower.

THE GOLDFINCH.

WHY are ye careless and merry ?
Is it a grand gala day ?
Feasting on thistle and berry ?
Nay, 't is a gala alway.

I too would live in the hedges,
And wear a surtout of brown,
Faced with pure gold on the edges,
A dweller in gay summer town.

I too would haunt the clematis,
And tweak off the elder's dark fruit,
And play o'er the vine-laden lattice,
And have all the world at my foot.

Ne'er would the long road seem weary
That windeth my gray dwelling by,
If my heart like your bosom were cheery,
And I gazed on the world with your eye.

Ne'er would existence lack savor,
Nor life seem a wearisome grind,
If I tasted your dish and its flavor,
And thought with your bright little mind.

Your taxes they cannot be heavy,
Your burdens are easily borne ;
Your foes ne'er distrain or replevy,
Your friends scarce prove false or forsworn

I hear in the bushes your patter,
You feed and you rise with the flock ;
And oft with your musical chatter
My hermit existence you mock.

And when frost comes nipping and biting,
Wide standeth the great Southern door,
New pleasures your presence inviting,
Life's change means to sing and to soar.

Like you I am lucky, small neighbor,
When chill comes the blast of his mouth,
Death will end all the heartache and labor,
And open my door to the South.

THE THRESHING-FLOOR.

COME, Jenny, into the barn, dear,
Where Jack slings high the flail ;
The golden stalks dance far and near,
The blows fall thick as hail.

So rich the tan upon his cheek,
So firm the graceful lines,
He stands like some inspired athlete
In Sparta's ancient times.

The flail beats out upon the ground
A song that fills his ears ;
“ 'T is love that makes the world go round,”
This happy thresher hears.

The sun steals past the old barn door
Which frames our upland wide,
And o'er the beams and on the floor
It plays at seek and hide.

The woods are caught in silver streams,
The meads are fresh and fair,
And through the vision of our dreams
Blue mountains rise in air.

And angels seem to walk in bands
Along yon cloudy pile ;
There may we fold our work-worn hands,
And rest within God's smile.

Two gray doves on the ridgepole sit,
And sun their bosoms' pride,
While swallows skim, and dive, and dip
In circles far and wide.

And white clouds shine far up above,
Like seraphs in the air ;
For all the powers of peace and love
Surround a happy pair.

The earth is verdant for their sake,
The hills are fair to see ;
The cautious echoes will not wake
To breathe love's mystery.

Jack's stout flail on the yellow grain
Shall chant of home and rest :
The loaf that 's won to that refrain
Is sweetest to the taste.

And while you stand to knead the bread,
And Jack swings high the flail,
No cloud shall shade your golden head,
The love-light shall not fail.

Come, Jenny, into the barn, dear ;
As trip your lightsome feet,
Our Jack shall cease the flail to hear,
And list his own heart beat.



AN INVITATION.

O CAST that dull, prosaic book away,
And read the poem of this summer day,
Unfolded by a heaven of sapphire blue,
With here and there a cloudlet wand'ring through
The spaces of our leafy orchard trees,
Swayed by a gentle, soft, delicious breeze,
To shadow dances on the sunny ground,
Mixed with bird-music, and the soothing sound
Of humming bees, of murm'ring gnats and flies,
And all the manifold and chirping cries,
From agéd trunks and half-embowered walls,
O'er which the graceful unpruned creeper falls,
Wreathing these granite rocks with soft festoons,
To hide the velvet moss beneath their blooms.
See how against the porch the roses climb
To meet and clasp that honeysuckle vine ;
With what a manly, tender sort of grace
It wooes the coy one to its fond embrace,
And, lifting up its fragile burden sweet,

Twines gently round our fav'rite window seat.
The bold wistaria, with a higher stride,
Fastens upon the topmost chimney side,
And decks the swallow's humble home with screen
Of purple blossoms and enchanting green.
Philosophy is sweetest out-of-doors,
God meant that we should take it through the pores.
Trust no conclusion, friend, till you have tried
Its worth with rocks, and streams, and trees be-
side.

Your indoor thoughts smell musty and look pale ;
They need the breath of woodlands to grow hale.
Aristotelian logic put away,
And choose a text from grass or budding spray ;
Show how the little cells grow into form,
And with the vivid soul of color warm.
Here, stretched full length beneath your fav'rite
tree,

Explain the sunbeam's mystic alchemy ;
Else turn aside from learning's tangled maze,
And dream away this loveliest of days.
We'll spend our thanks in wishing all men good,
The off'ring to our common brotherhood.
'T is easier to love the whole world round,



When stretched upon this daisy-sprinkled ground ;
'T is easier to own the gen'ral tie,
Beneath God's sacred overarching sky.
The fair republics of the woods are ours ;
Free institutions live amid the flowers ;
No heresy can gurgling brooklet teach,
No dang'rous doctrine can the daisy preach ;
"The Word" is written on each clover head ;
New "Gospels" blossom out in white and red.
Well preach, my friend, if preach indeed you must,
But call us not poor, wretched worms of dust ;
Fashion an oaten pipe, a poet's reed,
And in harmonious numbers chant your creed.
If curse there be upon the earth to-day,
'T is like some ancient ruin, grim and gray,
By nature's kindness fairly overgrown,
And wreathed in green, from base to capping
stone.

But, no, the earth is consecrate to God,
And holy is the dark and teeming clod ;
His own right hand has poured the sacred wine,
And pressed the chalice to your lips and mine,
Inspired with rapture ev'ry living thing ;
So, friend, come forth, rejoice, be glad, and sing.

OCTOBER WOODS.

WAVE on wave, surging over and under,
Wave on wave in a constant flow ;
Crimson and russet, yellow and umber,
Wave on wave in a mingled glow ;
Silver shot where the birches quiver,
Amber pale where the willows gleam,
All along by the shallow river,
Swollen high to a rushing stream.
Domes ye hang in the fleecy heaven,
Color domes on a dark blue sky,
Save when the tops by winds are riven,
And white clouds hurry and skurry by.
The sun weaves webs diaphanous, dreamy,
Like painted rhythm or music seen,
Throwing his shuttle bright and beamy,
Scarlet and gold through a purple screen.
Maple fresh in the woodland hollow,
Verdurous still though splashed with red,
Your young growth stains the bushy fallow,


As if Adonis had newly bled.
And when a shaft of exceeding splendor
Shivers the rainbow-tinted roof,
The shifting hues play soft and tender,
Silver and pearl in the mazy woof.
Rose as pure as June's faint blushes,
Painting the brow of a tranquil night,
Yellow that pales, then warms and flushes,
Near to the down of a cloud snow-white,
Where the beeches trail their banners,
Slant and sweep to the red cup moss,
And the chestnut rears its golden honors,
The hid sun leaves no sense of loss.
The oaks burn on with a crimson lustre,
Steady and dark in the mellow noon ;
Odorous now like grapes in cluster,
Ripening late to a kind of bloom.
Red the blood of the year is welling
Out of the heart of the stalwart wood ;
Strong the current is rising, swelling,
A color freshet, a wonder flood.
It fills the dell, it drowns the dingle,
And through the copse its billows stream,
And where the tide lines meet and mingle

Splendid parterres of crimson,
Blossoms of sunset dye,
Incline their heads to the goddess
Who paces slowly by.

And there in the glowing noontide,
Disporting in his glee,
Comes Eros, the mischief maker,
Disguised as a humble bee.

And he stings the dreaming goddess
Upon her rosy lip ;
As she shrieks and drops her mantle
Away the apples slip.

And the mellow harvest fruitage
Is ours until this day ;
Pomona's favorite apple
For love was cast away.



THE CAMP-FIRE.

A POINT of moonlight on the lake,
A nook of verdure deep imbayed,
A rocky shore where ripples break,
Yon camp-fire glowing through the shade ;

The mountains rather felt than seen,
As night confounds each crag and glen,
With trackless mystery between
The forest and the ways of men.

Tall spruces lift their tufted heads
Far in the dim and cloudy blue,
And a fair planet's radiance sheds
Its gleams the pillared arches through.

The night-wind brings a spicy breath
Of balsam on its airy wings ;
It pauses—all is hushed as death
Save where the woodland cricket sings.

The moon breaks from a little cloud
And gleams in golden ripples wide,
Old Whiteface weaves his airy shroud,
And mists creep down his rugged side.

The darkling forests peer and lean
Reflected in the glassy wave,
Black thrown upon a silver screen
With verdurous grot and mystic cave.

And tale and song and jest go round,
But something deeper stirs the heart,
From beauty's measureless profound,
E'en though from beauty's self apart.

Something that never yet was named,
Responsive to the spirit's thrill,
And like the wilderness untamed,
Whispers our idle mirth : " Be still."



ON THE MOUNTAIN MOSS.

BENEATH these pines and hemlocks tall
I rest upon the mountain's edge,
And list the distant waterfall
Pour down the ravine's craggy ledge.

Below a constant waste of green,
And billowed woods which softly rise ;
The lion-skin and shaggy screen
Of yon great Titan in the skies.

Slow sinks the gorge, a deep profound,
With Night the vestal of its woods,
And every dropping note of sound
Shivers where pensive Silence broods.

But serried pines have caught the light
Which streams, a bannered wave of gold,
And drowns the crags upon the height,
And floods the ravines, fold on fold.


The hermit thrush trills sweet and long
To celebrate the close of day,
A trickling silver rill of song,
Or music's tender mist and spray.

Gray mosses, like a giant's locks,
Are tangled with some fairy vine,
The blue-bell climbs and gaily mocks
The shattered stone and twisted pine.

Thus peering o'er the steep world's rim,
I seem to hear the planet glide,
Or through the crimson radiance swim
Harmonic on a starry tide.

Slow fades the light from off the glen,
Yet one tall tree glows like a pyre,
Its topmost boughs aflame, as when
A burning mountain jets with fire.

Ah! sweet the blue above my head
And yon small feathered cloud of rose,
And sweet the evening breezes shed
The balms and dews of deep repose.



Here on the moss shall life grow fair,
And all the past and future gleam,
E'en as the world transfigured there
And softer than a poet's dream.



THE HOMAGE OF BEASTS.

A PERSIAN FABLE.

KING Solomon, as I have heard,
The language knew of every bird.
He reigned alike o'er man and beast,
And bade them to his marriage feast.

Slow filing past his ivory throne
The animals came, one by one,
And humbly made obeisance there
For all their sovereign's gentle care.

The elephant, with mighty tread,
This strange procession fitly led ;
And close behind the lion stalked,
And all with due decorum walked.

Such gifts they brought to please the bride,
As nature's richest stores supplied,
And Solomon rejoiced to prove
His subjects' loyalty and love.

Now far behind the stately train
An ant came toiling o'er the plain,
And in his mouth he dragged along
A single grass-blade through the throng.

Nor him did Solomon contemn,
Nor this poor offering condemn ;
The ant he welcomed to the feast,
E'en though the very last and least.

By honoring both great and small,
By scorning none and loving all,
Was Solomon the wisest king
In those old days whereof I sing.

SEA LEGENDS.

WHISPER thy rarest legend, old, old sea,
Conjure the secrets of thy sorcery,
Canst thou remember when the world was young?
Canst thou remember the first song thy salt waves
 sung?

Whisper thy oldest legend, deep, deep sea,
How smiled creation's rose-dawn over thee,
And twined upon thy waves the blue expanse
With flecks of golden fire and whirling Pleiad's
 dance.

Whisper thy sweetest legend, old, old sea,
The loves of genii 'neath the coral tree,
Where nereids wanton on the weedy rocks
Unbinding to the breeze their pale and filmy locks.

Whisper thy saddest legend, old, old sea,
Of lives untimely swallowed up in thee,



White faces, tender, yearning, outstretched hands,
And breaking hearts that moan and sob forever on
thy sands.

Whisper thy mystic legend, old, old sea,
The vast and measureless eternity,
Forever heaving at a strange new birth,
The first and latest throe of gray and hoary earth.

Whisper thy lonely legend, old, old sea,
Thou art remote and foreign unto me,
Fingering the while each hidden pulse of soul ;
All loss, all pain, all rapture breathe within thy roll.

A WOOD PATH.

ALONG the path to yonder wood,
Star-eyed and fair this autumn day,
The asters stream a blossomed flood,
A kind of fallen milky-way.

The golden-rod its borders add
Unto this garden wildly grown,
Like banner of Sir Galahad,
With pearl, and gold, and purple sown.

For Autumn blends her choicest hues,
And mixes many a precious dye ;
The glory of her gentian blues
Match the deep splendors of her sky.

And all the groundlings don their best
And brightest, ere the trees arrange
A flaming red and crimson vest
For the great festival of change.



The very clods with richness gleam
Where golden mosses skirt the track ;
The squaw vine 'neath a leafy screen,
Bears a red berry on its back.

The pokeweed drips its purple wine,
The bitter-sweet is all alight,
The sumach flaunts its danger sign,
The clematis drifts gray and white.

The oaks are strong and grander far
Than when June's sunshine gilt the moss ;
Time's flowery dial, bell and star,
Points out no faintest sign of loss.

Hid is the warfare and the strife
Deep down in nature's inmost heart,
In full perfection of her life
The season's glory shall depart.

So may I quit this mortal scene
Nor know a waiting, slow decay ;
In the mild autumn's gold and sheen
Come, Death, fair harvester, and slay.

A WINTER SKY.

PALE Twilight beams from out her crystal tower,
And seems to smile upon the parting day ;
Some trembling beams still trick her windowed
bower,
But fast they fade before the encroaching gray.

Blue and weak red within the East are met,
Faint as the dyes which stain a sea-shell's whirl,
And low the slender crescent moon is set,
Carved perfect from a single flawless pearl.

But all the west is clear as limpid lakes,
Spaced for the eye like unresisting air ;
No flush of sunset through the pallor breaks,
But naught with that clear pallor can compare.

And thrown against the imaged form of peace,
Those depths of ether lucent as a gem,
The winds have tossed a wildly ragged fleece,
Torn all along the strange fantastic hem.



Its fringes stream like some gray monarch's hair,
Or Merlin's beard blown o'er his mighty breast,
Contending with the forces of the air,
With his magician's wand and wizard's vest.

And peering through those shaggy locks and wild
Some little stars look out with glad surprise,
Like Orpheus, he who turned and sweetly smiled,
Or like the youngest angel's sinless eyes.

And still the Twilight seems to lean and wait ;
Her asphodels are faint and faded now,
And Night, with sable plume and queenly state,
Stoops low to kiss her gentle sister's brow.

Alas ! for with that kiss she now must die,
Breathing the odor of Night's poppy flower ;
And Nature seems to gently heave a sigh
As fails the beam in Twilight's windowed bower.

For though clouds shimmer on to-morrow's eve,
And nameless beauty hovers o'er her train,
Twilight shall not the same enchantment weave,
This perfect moment ne'er can come again.

SUNNY GLEAMS.

How wild the sky ! how sweet the air !
Some breath of newness fills the day,
Leaves like a mænad's golden hair
Stream far along each forest way.

One moment warm, then overcast
And chill with strange and troublous gust,
The airy rout flies thick and fast,
The maple's glory lights the dust.

Flung like a tattered sunset cloud,
Leaves whirl and skim and flutter down ;
Poor gaudy things, earth's pomp and shroud,
They paint the roadway soft and brown.

Or float upon the swollen brook
Like hopes unfruitful in their day,
Or swirl within some yeasty nook
And make the sullen hemlocks gay.

The brown leaves rustle as I walk,
Each hath a tongue like ancient sage,
I list their thin and airy talk,
Which turns perforce on death and age.

For they are ghostly of their kind,
And babble of last summer's joy,
E'en how they sang upon the wind
Above some loving girl and boy.

Swift falls a shadow from the cloud,
Steel-gray the lakelet shudders wide,
Then breaks a splendor through the shroud,
And all the land is glorified.


The cedar nooks are snug and warm,
Where sheep have left a straggling lock,
An empty bird's nest in the thorn
The glowing woodbine seems to mock.

Late gleams, ye are the dearest far ;
The spendthrift summer lavished gold
Ye keep some door of hope ajar,
Through tempest-driven months of cold.

PINE TREES.

SHRILL and lone the sad evening is soughing,
And the great pine trees are bending and bowing,
Swaying about with a dreamy motion,
As if in acts of mystic devotion ;
Faint they gleam when the needles are lighted,
Or darkly gloom with their boughs united,
And dim above of an indigo azure
The sky is spaced for this mournful measure.
Along the trunks pale redness lingers,
And the branches point down threatening fingers ;
A black pool in the shadow is sleeping,
With mist wreaths over the surface creeping,
And along the west is a sky of wonder,
Blue and black, without mutter of thunder ;
But the cloud is edged with a band of yellow,
And borders a space serenely mellow ;
Through crystal clear or tinges of pallor
Gleams the red planet, the star of valor.
The land is hid in a soft brown shadow,
Hid is the road and the old home meadow ;

Only the sad evening wind keeps souging
And the great pine trees are bending and bowing,
And the night-jar's song like a vocal shiver
Sounds far off by the hidden river,
Running the gamut of solemn passion,
Crooning it out in a sombre fashion
That strikes the core of insensate nature,
And thrills to the soul of the living creature.
The heart pierced through by shadowy glory
Reads on earth and sky its own sad story ;
And the great composer sits at leisure,
And varies the theme of the mighty measure,
Sounding his anthem o'er earth and ocean,
A rhythmic beat in the pine trees' motion.



CLOUD PICTURES.

O WIND-BUILT city of the lofty fates,
How bright ye shine with splendors overrun,
Turning your misty halls and burnished gates
Unto the flooding rivers of the sun !

The mystic builder labored all the night,
Like one of giant-kind who wrought of old ;
Now cloudy banners stream from airy height
And battlements of pearl and beaten gold.

A wrack from out the hoary elder time
Heaves its huge bulk upon the western sky,
A thought of gray old towers that dimly shine,
A fragment from a dead world drifted by.

So, as the air drinks up the ancient seas,
To lay the curving beams of heaven's high dome,
Building with winsome sun and gentle breeze
A new Valhalla where new gods may come,

So through the texture of our bald to-day
Twine all the threads that made the mighty past,
And though like cloudland we shall pass away,
The new earth is the old earth till the last.

TO THE NYMPH.

A MAGIC light burns on the vernal sod ;
Along this way what tender thing hath trod ?
Some spirit rare has touched these leaves and
 flowers,
And kissed the pearly buds through blissful hours.

Art thou, sweet girl, the genius of this place,
Witching wise Nature's self with goddess grace ?
Can things inanimate thy life inform,
And the cold clod with perfect beauty warm ?

Immortal dream of some old devotee,
Who prayed to the great gods to set thee free ;
The white limbs glowing in thy perfect shape,
All loveliness of heaven and earth partake.

Thy breath of violets and odors rare ;
The sunny, loosed, and tendril-curling hair :
The buskined feet that run and skip and dance,
All hills and dales and budding meads entrance.

In bosky grove, by altar of the field,
The lover prayed to see this grace revealed,
And through the purple shadows could descry
Thy roseate charms of free-born symmetry.

In his glad day there lived no formal art ;
Then beauty woke the rapture of the heart ;
For poems out of man's devotion wrought,
We have the weary prose of care and thought.

But still, shy nymph, thy worship we pursue,
In sunrise glow, at evening in the dew,
In forest glade, by every purling stream ;
We find thee not but where thou late hast been.

O for the ancient faith and simple love
That lured thee from thy reedy fount and grove,
The power to soothe thy terrors and alarms
And clasp thee glowing in expectant arms !

CALLING THE BIRDS.

COME, throstle throat and robin breast,
Come, bluebird with the rosy crest,
Come, little wren in golden brown,
And kingbird with the orange crown,
Come, hedge-side sparrow chirping clear,
Come, wingéd friends from far and near.
The open furrow waits you now,
The cottage eave and orchard bough,
And singing pine and cedar warm
Shall house you snug from sleety storm.
O twittering voices, silent long,
Come in a cheery bustling throng,
Flood the dim porches of the day,
The dawn's faint pearl and rosy gray,
With freshest rapture of the spring,
As if all nature strove to sing.
O downy breasts of purest white,
And throats a-quiver with delight,
O wings that skim and mount and dive,
And thrill the leafless land alive,

With shadows on the greening grass
 That flash and twinkle as you pass,
 Now set your gleeful voices free
 To bubbling founts of melody.
 Come, mavis shy to forest glade,
 Come, phœbe bright eye ne'er afraid,
 And plume your wings and twittering soar
 For this remote unfriended shore.
 The fruit trees bear you moss and gum,
 Blue cedar berries bid you come ;
 And brambles low have gathered wool
 For tiny bills to twine and pull.
 O come and weave the fairy nest
 And sing in busy idleness,
 Dropping each careless little air
 As God sheds healing everywhere ;
 Balance upon the maple's spire
 That soon shall glow with rosy fire,
 And sit, and swing, and pour your mirth
 Upon the brown old sober earth,
 Happy although you know not why,
 Nor dreaming that your joy shall die.
 O ye are nearer than ye guess
 Unto the soul of blessedness.

WINTER TWILIGHT.

A CHURCH spire rises dark and still
Against an orange sunset sky ;
No burning cloud broods o'er the hill,
No fleck of flame floats far and high.

All vacant the entrancéd air,
Save filmy webs of color dyed,
And all the ridges, bleak and bare,
Are bathing in this magic tide.

Close-clinging mask—the snow enshrouds
Each tiny dell and sculptured knoll ;
The dying god unveiled by clouds,
Brims with his blood earth's Parian bowl.

The nun-like woods in russet clad
Burn in a red concentrated heat,
The evergreens, so strong and glad,
Are rosy to their muffled feet.

The hilltop's smooth and rounded crest
Is lifted bare to meet the light,
But half-way down the rugged breast
Its glory fades into the night.

A pearly haze hangs o'er the stream,
Like incense from some secret prayer ;
And soft as timbrels in a dream,
Frost crystals tinkle on the air.

Pale azure tints creep on apace,
Faint as the slowly parting breath ;
And in this cold and marble grace,
We seem to look on Nature's death.

Far, far beneath the glens are lone,
Ringed round with fir-trees' dusky shade,
And banded solemn tone on tone
The purple o'er the blue is laid.

Still low the sunset findeth room
To burn the fringes of the night ;
Eclipsed in glory and in gloom,
The earth has vanished from our sight.

This painted window of the West
Is set in God's grand minster wall ;
Here in the outer courts we rest,
But soft its splendors o'er us fall.

Between the gloaming and the night
There lingers yet a single bar
In the great symphony of light ;
And now steals in one little star.



COROT'S 'ORPHEUS.'

SWEET dove of dawn with silver breast,
Seen dimly through the fleeting shade,
Drugged with her warm and dreamless rest,
The earth scarce wakes ere thou dost fade.

Color unborn in herb or tree
Floats filmy on the silent air,
And beauty, fluent still and free,
A spirit breathing everywhere.

Vast depths of space that seem to thrill
And tremble with the coming day,
That mystic moment prayerful still,
Ere gold has flooded all the gray.

High mottled clouds upon the edge
Have caught a little quivering beam,
No dew-drop shining on the hedge,
No light upon the hidden stream.

But all the landscape drenched with dew,
And freshness stealing from the founts ;
Bright beams that pierce the tree-tops through,
While in the east a glory mounts.

Stealthy the breath from herb and flower
Creeps now through dripping leaves and grass,
To pay sweet tribute to the hour,
And freight the breezes as they pass.

The god comes forth to greet the light,
Dilating with the breath of song,
And like a swallow in its flight
By inspiration borne along.

He grasps the lyre with careless hand,
Forgetful of its charmed strings ;
One moment ere their tones expand,
The voiceless spirit soars and sings.

Sacred as truth these hues and lines,
Religious as a minster aisle ;
When reverence thy soul inclines,
Come gaze and lose thyself the while.



A FLOCK OF BIRDS.

ABOVE the city far and high
I saw them wing their gladsome way,
A long dark skein against the sky,
Just at the solemn close of day.

From out the sunset gate they flew,
And black were painted on the red ;
And more and more in numbers grew,
As toward some airy bourne they sped.

My spirit soared from grounds of care,
Beneath the rapture of their flight,
And like the sudden breath of prayer
Winged upward to the fading light.

O sense of freedom unconfined
That with a rush of pinions came,
Borne on a vision of the mind,
As on the leaping tongues of flame !

And all the glad life of the bird
Thrilled through me like melodic sound ;
A wondrous joy my being stirred,
And changed the common world around.

I seemed to spurn the city's wall,
To leave this creeping life below,
And through the twilight's purple hall
Forward with those plumed pilgrims go.

Out of the dreary day they came,
To flood the blank of all before,
To smite the grovelling hours with shame,
And give the spirit leave to soar.

Such miracles as dim the eye
With deep emotion's nameless power,
Spring from a bird's flight through the sky,
Or the still smiling of a flower.




BUTTERFLIES.

LATE in the gleamy weather,
Over the blighted heather,
When smiles part the clouds in frowning,
And kiss the sad earth in browning,
They flit through the garden closes,
Over the graves of roses,
Like souls of perished flowers
Haunting their ancient bowers—
Flit when the wind it waieth,
And the milkweed's silk it saileth ;
When the virgin's-wool is spinning,
And the half-clad woods are ringing
With caw, caw, hoarse and hollow,
O'er the stubble and the fallow,
And the mist is a forerunner
To mild St. Martin's summer.

Flirting, and pairing, and choosing
Chasing, and winning, and losing,

Pausing in air on their pinions,
Flitting all o'er my dominions,
They weave their strange little fancies,
And throw out their bright little glances,
Sparkles of God's gentle spirit,
His love and his cheer they inherit :
Bathing in sun-baths of beauty,
Pastime their life and their duty,
Innocent roving and pleasure
Rounded their being's full measure ;
All of the sunshine their money,
All of their feast the dew's honey ;
When o'er the high pasture thistle
They heard the quail drum and whistle,
Heard the far cattle-bell jingle,
The still air would vibrate and tingle,
And the smell of sweet fern came gliding
Out of its nook and its hiding,
Then did they hover like fire
Over the mullein's tall spire.

Splendor of bird and of blossom,
Of gem in the earth's dusky bosom,
Splendor of sunset and morning



Their sheer little pinions adorning,
Splendors that sparkle and shimmer
With azure and scarlet in glimmer,
Snow-white in processional knitting
And yellow like primroses flitting.
O sweet in the mild autumn weather
To see them skim hither and thither ;
But when the cold tempest shall mutter,
Down, down to the ground they will flutter,
Like leaves that have taken to flying,
And must fall when the autumn comes sighing.
But the joy and the brief winged rapture,
Say, does it outweigh the grim capture,
When Death puts an end to the dances,
And quenches those bright little glances ?

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